

## **Faith, hope are better than hate**

Wednesday was "Everybody Draw Mohamed Day" on the social media website Facebook.

This stunt certainly is not an expression of free speech. Rather, it is a blatant act of hate and disrespect, an uncalled-for provocation and attack on Our Revered Prophet of Islam.

One and a half billion Muslims around the globe, including me, are offended and hurt that Facebook helped promote this shameful act.

For the past few years, when these offensive cartoons were allowed to be published in Europe, there was an uproar by Muslims, as well as by people of conscience from other faiths. They wanted to stop these infuriating, insulting acts. Then Muslims worldwide came out against retaliatory cartoons that offensively depicted Jesus Christ (peace be upon Him).

At the time, the United Nations issued a statement that said freedom of speech does not grant the right to insult or humiliate anyone's religious symbols as an obvious act of provocation.

Muslims love their beloved Prophet Mohamed, and I am one of them. Part of my faith is that I will love God and Prophet Mohamed more than my own family — father, mother, sister, wife and children combined. My fellow Americans have to know that, and when they become better educated on the best of humanity (Prophet Mohamed), they will join the fight to stop hate and bigotry against everyone.

Considering events of the past nine years — with wars that have cost billions of dollars and untold lives all over the world — wouldn't the answer to keeping us safe be in winning the hearts and minds of people by giving them hope for a dignified life? Shouldn't we strive to promote moderation, which will alienate and silence extremists from all sides? Shouldn't we build bridges of understanding and concentrate on education to foster mutual knowledge and respect, and to encourage kindness, prosperity and peace?

I believe American Muslims will pursue the gift of peace and bridge the gap between America and the Muslim world by working closely with the Muslim Task Force on issues of security and terrorism. They may be the best ones to identify the bad elements, as they have done successfully on numerous occasions, but with scant coverage by the media.

The same task force will work with the Organization of Islamic Countries, which represents one-fourth of the world's population, about mutual issues of energy, oil, economics, security and peaceful resolution of conflicts. This spirit of cooperation was reflected in a speech last June in Cairo, when President Barack Obama talked about a "new beginning."

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